

## **REMARKS**

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 9, 11 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by Hirano (U.S. Patent No. 6,447,445). The Examiner also objected to claims 6-8, 10, 13 and 14 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but noted that such claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By the amendments to claims 1, 6 and 9, and through the cancellation of claims 4 and 5, Applicant seeks to put the present application in condition for allowance. It is respectfully submitted that the '445 patent to Hirano does not teach or suggest the invention of amended independent claim 1, especially with respect to a mounting adaptor as disclosed and now claimed.

As can be clearly seen in FIG. 4 of the '445 patent, the function-related units, namely the optical/lens system 20, the illuminating means 10, and the guiding means for treating tools 30 are connected to the endoscope shaft independently and separately from each other. There is no mounting adapter comprising all connections for connecting the conduits and/or passages of the endoscope shaft with the function-related units of the head. Unfortunately, contamination problems are decisive for gaining permission to bring a new design for an endoscope onto the market and the individual and separate connections of the function related units according to the '445 patent create the problem of contamination already during assembly of the endoscope, since the shaft and the head have to be assembled as one piece.

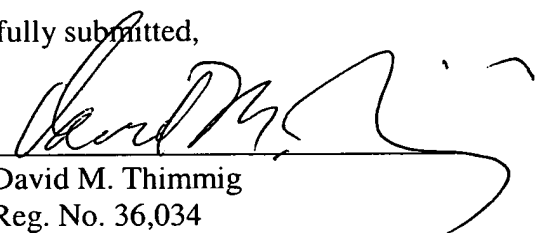
In the present invention, however, the head is completely mounted separately from the shaft. As the final assembly step, the head is completely pre-mounted, and therefore, isolated from contaminations and the completely pre-mounted shafts have to simply be connected with each other via the mounting adapter, wherein all connections are made in this final connecting

step. It is respectfully submitted that for this reason, amended independent claim 1, which incorporates the limitations of canceled claims 4 and 5, and further includes that all connections between the shaft and head are provided by the mounting adapter, is novel and non-obvious, and distinguishes over the '445 patent. Further, given the patentability of independent claim 1, it is believed that claims 2, 3 and 6-14 also are patentable, as they each add further limitations to those of patentable claim 1.

No claims have been added by this Amendment, and therefore, it is believed that no fee is due with this filing. If the Examiner determines that there are any additional fees due in connection with the filing of this Response, please charge the fees (or credit any overpayment) to our Deposit Account No. 13-0019.

Respectfully submitted,

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